

TOWN OF DAVIDSON  
(H.C. Frick Coke Company)  
On T 700 E off SR 1031  
Davidson  
Fayette County  
Pennsylvania

HAER No. PA-363

HAER  
PA  
26-DAVID,  
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record  
National Park Service  
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HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

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Location: On T 700 E off SR 1031, Davidson,  
Fayette County, Pennsylvania

Date of Construction: ca. 1960

Present Owner: Various private owners.

Present Use: Residences.

Significance: Originally developed by Norton, Faber,  
and Miskimmer in 1856, the town of  
Davidson was acquired by the H.C. Frick  
Coke Company in 1888. Frick expanded  
the existing coal mine and coke works,  
operating these and the town through the  
1920s. The town retains a number of the  
earliest surviving coal miners' houses  
in southwestern Pennsylvania.

Historian: Sarah Heald, 1990.

Project Information: The results of the study of Fayette  
County were published in 1990: Sarah  
Heald, editor, Fayette County,  
Pennsylvania: An Inventory of Historic  
Engineering and Industrial Sites  
(Washington, D.C.: America's Industrial  
Heritage Project (AIHP) and HABS/HAER,  
National Park Service). The contents of  
the publication were transmitted to the  
Library of Congress as individual  
reports. Research notes, field photos  
and copies of historic photos collected  
during the project were transmitted to  
the AIHP Collection, Special  
Collections, Stapleton Library, Indiana  
University of Pennsylvania, Indiana, PA  
15705.

The town of Davidson consists of about twenty houses built on deep lots along one street and a short intersecting spur road. The extant buildings appear to be most of the dwellings that composed the northern section of the town. All are double houses, although a few on the spur road have been altered and are now single-family dwellings. The two types of double-family houses that remain in Davidson were built in two distinct periods. The earliest period, dating from the 1860s, witnessed the construction of houses on the south side of the main street. The surviving dwellings from this early period include two double houses with board-and-batten siding. These houses have a single, central, brick chimney, a front shed-roofed porch, and a brick and rubble-stone foundation. While more substantially altered and covered with aluminum siding, the houses on the spur road appear to be this same type. These buildings may date from 1868.

Dating from a later period of construction, probably the early 1910s, all thirteen of the frame houses on the north side of the main street and two on the south side are four-bay, rest on concrete-block foundations, have gable roofs that run parallel to the street, two brick chimneys, and hipped-roof porches over each front door entry; with the exception of a few replacements, all windows are one-over-one-light double-hung sash with small pediments at the top. All of these houses have shed-roofed porches, most of which are now enclosed, across the back. Small rectangular foundations of concrete at the back of these lots probably once supported outhouses for the homes.

The coal property at Davidson was originally developed by Norton, Faber, and Miskimmer and placed into operation around 1856. The Pittsburgh and Connellsville Gas, Coal & Coke Company, organized in 1860 and capitalized at \$300,000, sank a shaft and built forty beehive coke ovens at the site. In 1868, the company built a store and increased the number of workers' houses at the mine. Most of these dwellings (approximately sixteen) were built south of the existing townsite. By 1883, the company had 296 beehive coke ovens in operation.

When the H. C. Frick Coke Company acquired the property on October 1, 1888, the mine had 1,992 acres of assigned coal which was accessed by a 120'-deep shaft. The coal vein was 7.8' thick. The plant had two long, curved, batteries of bank beehive coke ovens. Davidson experienced more violence than most during the 1894 mine protests; four strikers and one company official were killed here.

In 1902 the company built ten double houses, and in 1903, added five more semi-detached houses. These dwellings were located north of the coke ovens. In 1903 the company had 204 employees working at the plant, sixty-seven of whom were engaged in coke

manufacture, producing 93,300 tons of coke in Davidson's 333 ovens in that year. By 1928 daily coal production capability was 1,000 tons. During World War II, Davidson was mined-out and at the end of the war the ovens and mine were abandoned.

Sources

Connellsville Coal and Coke Region from Latrobe, Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania, to Fairchance, Fayette County, Pennsylvania. n.p., 1883. Map on file at the Fayette County Campus of Penn State University.

Ellis, Franklin. History of Fayette County, Pennsylvania. 2 Volumes. Philadelphia: L.H. Everts Company 1882; reprint edition, Evansville, Indiana: Unigraphic Inc., 1977.

Enman, John Aubrey. "The Relationship of Coal Mining and Coke Making to the Distribution of Population Agglomerations in the Connellsville (Pennsylvania) Beehive Coke Region." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 1962.

General Mine Map of the Davidson Mine, Connellsville Township, Fayette County, Pennsylvania, June 1928. Compiled by the Engineering Department of the H. C. Frick Coke Company, Scottdale Pennsylvania. Original on file in the Resource Management Office of the United States Steel Corporation, Uniontown, Pa.

Insurance Map Showing Surface Lines, Rights of Way, Buildings, Pipelines, Etc., at the Davidson of the H. C. Frick Coke Company, Connellsville Township, Fayette County, Pennsylvania, October 1908. Original on file in the Resource Management Office of the United States Steel Corporation, Uniontown, Pa.

Map of Connellsville Coke Region and Adjacent Territory, Western Pennsylvania. n.p., ca. 1905-1913.

Map of the Connellsville Coke Region and Adjacent Fields. Uniontown: South Penn Engineering Company, 1913.

Map of the Connellsville Coke Region and Adjacent Fields. Uniontown: South Penn Engineering Company, 1921.

Report of the Department of Mines of Pennsylvania: Bituminous Region, 1903. Harrisburg: William Stanley Ray, State Printer 1904.

Storey, Walter J. "Brief History of Coal & Coke in Fayette County," unpublished essay, 1982. Portions were published in the Uniontown Herald-Standard 100th Anniversary edition, 15 November 1988.

Topographical Map of the Connellsville Coke Region. H. C. Frick Coke Company 1892. Originals on file at the Resource Management Office of the United States Steel Company, Uniontown, Pennsylvania.